



Reading Toolkit: Grade 6 Objective 3.A.7.a

Student Handout: Reading: Grade 6 Objective 3.A.7.a

Standard 3.0 Comprehension of Literary Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Literary Text

Indicator 7. Analyze the author's purposeful use of language

Objective a. Analyze specific words and phrases that contribute to meaning

Assessment Limits:

Significant words and phrases (e.g., idioms, colloquialisms, etc.) with a specific effect on meaning

Denotations of above-grade-level words used in context

Connotations of grade-appropriate words and phrases in context

Selected Response (SR) Item

Question

Read the article titled '[Swamp Talk](#)' and answer the following questions. Circle the letter of the correct answer.

Read this sentence from paragraph 4.

She secured the hammock.

Which word could replace *secured* and NOT change the meaning of the sentence?

- A. fastened
- B. lowered
- C. patted
- D. released

Correct Answer

A. fastened

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Handouts

Swamp Talk

By Jean George
(from The Talking Earth)

She folded her arms and looked over the forest. The trees were flared at the bases. This uncanny growth buttressed the cypress in the rainy season when the island was flooded with water and rendered the trees unstable. Near each tree jutted waist-high triangular "knees" that grew up from the roots. These breathed air when the roots were under water. Billie Wind walked among them until she found two slender trees that did not have buttresses.

²"These trees are talking to me," she realized. "When the land is high and dry cypress trees do not grow buttresses. They grow straight like these. So the land is dry here. I have found a good campground."

"Petang," she called. "Where are you? We are going to camp here until our boat is made." The otter answered by rustling palmettos and splashing into the water.

⁴Billie Wind slung her hammock high. The species of mosquito that had been biting her did not fly higher than nine feet above the land, and so she would hang her bed at least ten feet high. To get up and down she braided a rope out of one of the many kinds of vines, tied it to the hammock and climbed up the tree. She secured the hammock.

Petang returned as she was putting the last stone on the fireplace. His sides were round and bulging.

"Goodness," she said. "You have been eating well. What's out there? Frogs? Fish?" She walked toward the shore to gather for herself whatever Petang had eaten.

⁷A hiss sounded. The palmettos thrashed, and as Billie Wind jumped backward, she looked down on an enormous mother alligator who was escorting dozens of baby alligators down the side of a mound of humus, her nest. She turned back to reach one hatchling who was still buried and peeping. Using her awkward-looking foot, she gently pulled back the black plants and let him climb out. A raccoon pounced on a baby at the bottom of the pile. She roared down on him, slashed her jaws and cut off his tail. He ran screaming into the brush. A heron flapped down and hovered over the tasty hatchlings. The mother alligator grunted and slammed her jaws, barely missing the bird, who rose higher to wait for another opportunity to strike. Roaring and snapping, the mother gator led her brood toward the safety of the water.

Billie Wind backed all the way home and climbed her rope to her hammock. She knew better than to stay anywhere near a mother alligator and her young.